



**Proposed Land Acquisition/Airspace Establishment in Support  
of Large-Scale MAGTF Live Fire and Maneuver Training  
Project Overview Paper—Issue #6—February 25, 2011  
Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command  
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center  
Twentynine Palms, CA**

I. **Background:** Marines must train as they fight. To meet tomorrow's challenges, the Marine Corps must plan today to fulfill Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training requirements. To do this, more training land and airspace are needed than are now available anywhere in the country. As a result, the Marine Corps has been studying alternatives for proposed training-land acquisition and accompanying Special Use Airspace for three battalions to simultaneously maneuver in close coordination using combined-arms (e.g., air/ground) live fire for a 48-72 hour training period. A Marine Corps study, conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), assessed three regions of the country for their capability to support sustained MEB training. It found the Southwest most suitable, but it showed that achieving the required sustained, combined-arms live-fire maneuver MEB training capability, without distributed operations (i.e., spread over multiple bases) and representational forces, would require expansion at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC), Twentynine Palms, CA.

II. **Project Alternatives:** The Marine Corps has considered many alternatives to meet its MEB training requirements at MCAGCC, looking to the north, south, east and west. Five land acquisition and associated airspace establishment alternatives were presented to interested stakeholders at Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) public scoping meetings in December 2008. Nearly 20,000 public comments on these alternatives and issues have helped to develop a range of reasonable alternatives to meet MEB training requirements, including an "Alternative 6" that would accommodate continued public access to 40,000 acres in the West Study Area when Marines would not use the area for MEB training.

III. **NEPA Process:** A Draft EIS (DEIS) analyzes these six alternatives, and a "No Action Alternative," consistent with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. The alternatives, how training would occur under them, their environmental impacts, and ways to mitigate those impacts are described in a DEIS, which has been made available for review and comment by the public. Stakeholders – including public agencies; state, local and tribal governments; businesses, non-governmental organizations, including conservationists, recreation enthusiasts, developers and individuals – can participate in a transparent process to review and comment on the DEIS. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) serve as cooperating agencies in this process.

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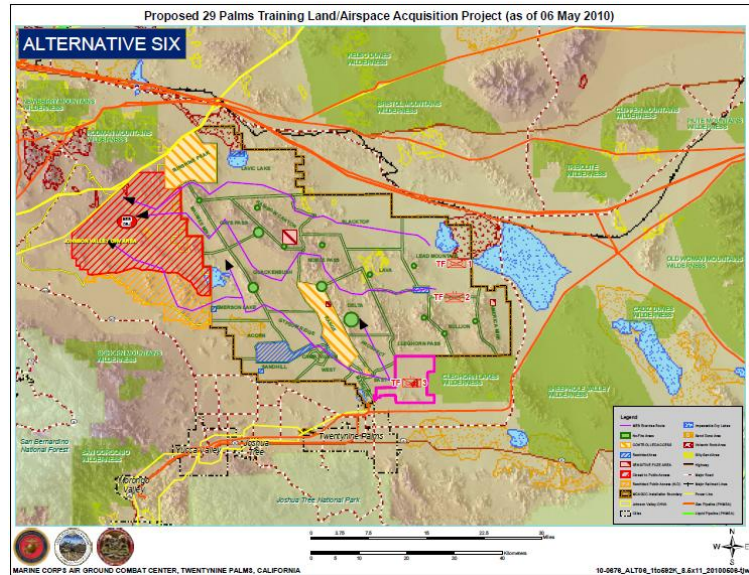
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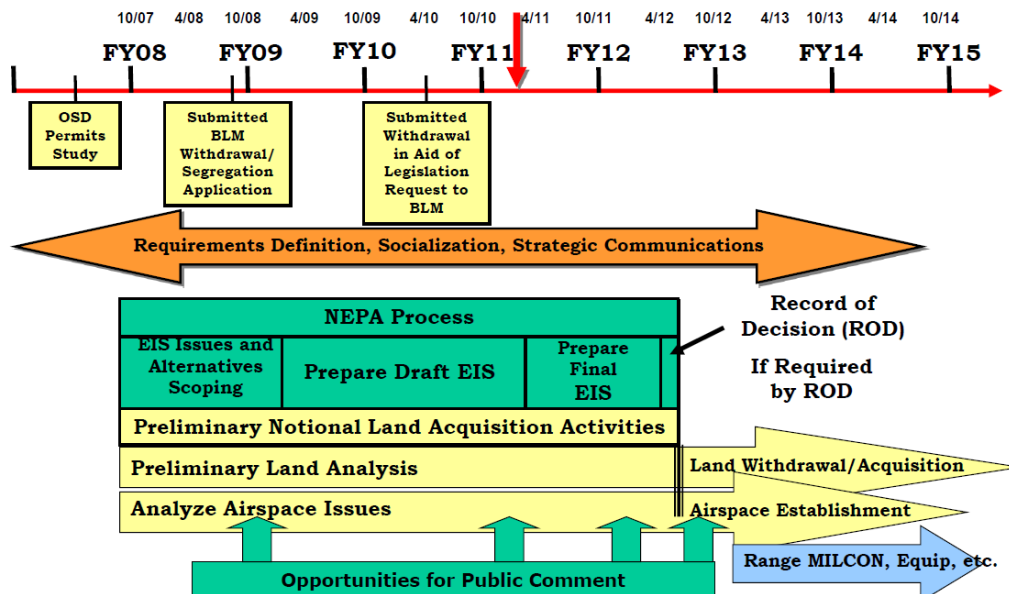
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IV. Making a Decision: The Department of the Navy will evaluate the comments made on the DEIS and use them to prepare a Final EIS. The Final EIS will form part of the basis to select the best course of action to fulfill MEB training requirements. This decision – based on the EIS, costs, training requirements, etc. – will be published in a Record of Decision (ROD). If the ROD concludes that withdrawal of public lands from the BLM is recommended, the Congress would have to agree to any such withdrawal and the federal government must also pay fair market value for any non-federal lands it proposes to acquire. The FAA would then initiate the formal process necessary to establish any accompanying Special Use Airspace needed for MEB training.

V. Preferred Alternative: Alternative 6 is selected in the DEIS as the preferred alternative: it is the optimal alternative considering operational and environmental impact factors together. Developed in response to public comments it was designed to preserve public access to important off-road recreation areas during periods when MEB training did not require use of those lands. The Alternative would allow for reopening to public recreation use approximately 40,000 acres of the acquisition area for 10 months a year.



VI. Project Timeline: The graphic below displays major project elements and current timeline.



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